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Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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AGENDA ITEM 95: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/49/24 and Add.1, A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/213, A/49/287-S/1994/894, A/49/294, A/49/307-S/1994/958, A/49/381, A/49/422, A/49/434, A/49/435, A/49/462 and Corr.1; A/C.3/49/4)

1. Mr. RAHIM (Bangladesh) said that social issues were based on the recognition of the centrality of the individual, the acceptance of human equality and the worth and dignity of the human person. Yet social development was predicated on progress in economic development and together with environment and population formed the logic of comprehensive sustainable development; they formed an integral whole. The main motor of development would remain accelerated economic growth, fuelled by additional resource inputs.

2. Despite considerable economic progress, social development had largely been unsuccessful in most developing countries. There was an increasing feeling that social development required a comprehensive approach on the part of national Governments and the international community. The economic and trade policies of the developed countries, as well as international and domestic political issues, clearly influenced social problems in the developing countries.

3. Any approach to social development needed to focus on a whole range of chronic social problems. Developing countries were addressing those areas, but many of the problems involved global factors beyond the control of individual States, and were compounded by difficulty in bringing about sustainable economic development. That caused falling standards of living, mass poverty, and health, nutrition and housing problems, compounded by natural and man-made disasters in many developing States.

4. Bangladesh, however, had made considerable progress in social development; human development was considered most important for long-term poverty alleviation and sustained economic growth. Empowerment of women and education for development received the greatest priority; an important aspect of that was a major new programme of free tuition for female students.

5. In the fields of health and population, considerable progress had also been achieved. His country's immunization programme currently covered over 80 per cent of children, population growth had fallen to around 1.8 per cent annually, and poverty-alleviation efforts were well under way. Women were receiving training, and being motivated to participate in all aspects of society. His Government was also seeking to address poverty alleviation through regional cooperation.

6. Having intensified national and regional efforts for social development, Bangladesh now sought a wider, collective approach. At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, an urgent global and comprehensive approach was needed

to social development, which was the concern of both rich and poor. The final declaration should identify the objectives of social development and set achievable goals, matched by adequate resource commitments. His delegation welcomed the suggestion that the Summit should produce an international strategy for social development, which would provide the basis for social progress, development and peace in the coming years.

7. Mr. Kwang Jae LEE (Republic of Korea) said that, despite prevailing feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in the current era of transition, a new vision had been found which might lead to genuine world peace. The international community had acknowledged the inextricable relationship between development and peace, highlighting the importance of human-centred development and addressing the root causes of social, economic and political problems. One of the greatest challenges was the achievement of social development, without which neither sustainable economic development nor political stability could be achieved. Concrete actions should be taken to improve the human condition, eradicate poverty and secure fundamental human rights.

8. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report entitled "An Agenda for Development". The various conferences being held on social issues demonstrated the resolve of the United Nations to further enhance social development and the will of the world community to take steps towards addressing current social ills. He hoped that a feeling of solidarity among people would be created at all levels, which would profoundly effect international security and the welfare of future generations.

9. Social development required the participation and cooperation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, mass media and intergovernmental agencies. There should be further efforts towards promoting the participation of vulnerable groups in planning and decision-making. The empowerment of all actors in society was essential for social progress.

10. Despite varying national priorities, attention should not be diverted from securing fundamental human rights and considering universal standards. It was also necessary to create an environment that would facilitate social development, with attention to the different development needs of developing countries. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development would be a milestone, providing an opportunity for redefining sustainable development - with appropriate balance between economic efficiency and social justice - and for integrating the needs of socially marginalized groups into development programmes. His Government was ready to share its development experience and contribute fully to efforts for global social development. He also hoped that the Manila Declaration on social development adopted at the recent conference of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), would make a valuable contribution to the World Summit.

11. One of the main priorities in social development was to address the vast inequalities currently existing in the world. Greater emphasis should be placed on gender equality, particularly in the division of labour. The needs and aspirations of youth should be reviewed, with firm commitment to strengthening

youth-related activities in order to develop the full potential of youth. On the issue of ageing, he welcomed recent United Nations efforts, and called for additional measures to raise public awareness of the elderly as a valuable part of society.

12. The general public's conception of disability was also a challenge to be faced. It was crucial to raise awareness and to eliminate socially determined barriers through development activities and legislation. He welcomed the adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

13. The role of the family was increasingly important; it provided the basic foundation for social stability. Relevant international, national and grass-roots action should continue beyond the International Year of the Family, with special attention to improving the living conditions of low-income and single-parent families.

14. The Korean people hoped that the international community would reconcile its differences and create a greater feeling of solidarity. The goal should be to achieve social development in accordance with the ideals of sustainable development. In that respect, a human-centred approach would have a more lasting effect in achieving stability and prosperity. His delegation wished to emphasize the importance of the democratic participation of all actors in society, the protection of fundamental human rights and the promotion of social welfare and equality.

15. Mr. SISWOYO (Indonesia) said that the World Summit for Social Development would provide the opportunity to assess social progress and the effectiveness of international machinery aimed at the economic and social advancement of all peoples. In the context of youth affairs, the Ministers of the Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, meeting at Cairo in June 1994, had called on the United Nations General Assembly to devote special plenary meetings in 1995 to commemorating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and adopting the draft world youth programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond, as well as a youth statement of intent. Stressing the importance of international cooperation and national action with regard to youth affairs, he said that the expansion of employment opportunities in line with education levels was particularly significant for young people. In Indonesia, where the educated urban youth in particular were hit by unemployment, measures were being taken to expand those opportunities, improve vocational training programmes and follow a market-oriented school curriculum. A related issue that should also be discussed at the Summit was better access to financial support during and after periods of study.

16. Progress had been made in raising social awareness with a view to addressing the problems faced by the disabled. His delegation continued to regard the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) as a means of implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, while the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with

Disabilities provided a further framework for the participation of disabled persons in social and development activities. He also shared the view that the Long-Term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons should form an integral part of the goals and programmes of society at large.

17. His delegation agreed with the conclusion reached in the Secretary-General's report on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/49/213) that cooperative enterprises were a means of creating productive employment, overcoming poverty and achieving social integration, which were the main themes of the Summit. In that connection, measures were already under way in Indonesia to enhance the functioning and overall resources of cooperatives, underscoring the view that their role in involving people in national development and improving their situation should be supported.

18. His country was committed to ensuring that the World Summit for Social Development was a resounding success that would lead to tangible and sustainable social progress. The non-aligned countries attached great importance to international cooperation for social development and had emphasized at the aforementioned Cairo Conference that the Summit's core issues should place people and their social needs at the heart of international endeavours, the aim being to adopt an action-oriented plan with clear objectives, means of implementation and appropriate follow-up. Although preparatory endeavours for the Summit had been slower than anticipated, he was confident that an acceptable draft declaration and draft programme of action would soon be forthcoming as a vehicle for the advancement of social development into the next century. Finally, he underlined the importance of a holistic approach to the multifaceted issues of social development and his conviction that higher standards of living in larger freedom could be achieved only through international cooperation and dialogue.

19. Ms. FERTEKLIGIL (Turkey) said the 1995 World Summit for Social Development would be of the greatest importance for the future of humanity, and would demonstrate the determination of the international community to deal with the world's endemic social problems. It was of overriding importance for the world community to cooperate in fostering social development, which in turn would help to maintain peace and stability. Her Government welcomed the emerging consensus on the historic importance of that Summit.

20. Turkish society was experiencing rapid social and economic changes, leading to increased urbanization. The Government was pursuing its efforts to enhance the quality of life and to promote equal opportunities in employment, education and health. It was mobilizing the country's resources for sustainable economic, social and environmental development. High priority was being given to social integration, especially the needs and potential contribution of families, young people, the elderly, women and the disabled.

21. The Government's fifth five-year plan included measures of high priority designed to help the young, with particular emphasis on preventing delinquency and drug abuse and protecting young people from disease, especially AIDS.

22. Measures in favour of the disabled had long been embodied in Turkey's legislation and programmes, with emphasis on the practical aspects of integrating the disabled into society. The numbers of disabled people world wide were actually growing; armed conflicts continued to exacerbate that problem.

23. In most countries, especially developed countries, the numbers of elderly people were increasing rapidly owing to falling mortality and improved health care. Accordingly, it was essential to enable the elderly to participate fully in society, and society would in turn benefit from their wealth of creativity and experience. The International Day for the Elderly provided an excellent opportunity for showing due consideration to elderly persons; in Turkish society, they were traditionally treated with particular respect.

24. The International Year of the Family had emphasized the role of the family in society not only as a source of stability and well-being, but also as a major force in social transformation and solidarity. She particularly wished to underline the importance of the family in that respect.

25. Programmes for the eradication of poverty had not so far succeeded in making a major difference to the world situation; additional efforts would doubtless be required for any success to be achieved.

26. The various United Nations activities in the field of social development would provide guidance for the world community's efforts in the remaining years of the twentieth century. The success of those activities would require undiminished solidarity with all social groups in need of help.

27. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of Central and South American States, reiterated the Group's firm commitment to the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development and to constructive participation in the preparatory process. In the past 30 years, the gap between rich and poor had doubled; endemic social problems posed daunting tasks. The first of three basic assumptions to emerge from recent discussions was that development should not only incorporate such concepts as sustainable or social development but should also integrate the interests of the diverse parties concerned. The common goal of development must be to meet the basic needs of both poor and affluent societies. Secondly, development issues were of mutual interest and hence of mutual responsibility. Consensus on the social aspects of development required a willingness to recognize the global nature of the social crisis, an ability to avoid rhetoric and a real commitment to concrete action. Thirdly, income distribution, protection of the environment and the promotion of peace and democracy were severely limited without sustainable economic growth, which was both the engine of development and the necessary means of redressing social imbalances.

28. The three core issues of the Summit, namely poverty alleviation, productive employment and social integration, should therefore be addressed from that perspective. Poverty alleviation demanded a proper balance between relief and structural policies. Although Governments were primarily responsible for devising and implementing such policies, success depended on an international economic environment that promoted global development based on fairness and mutual benefit among countries. The promotion of macroeconomic stability and an open international trade system were central to global sustainable economic development. Furthermore, since even prosperous societies were threatened by high unemployment, the creation of more productive employment should form a basic objective with a view to overcoming poverty and achieving social integration. The highest priority should be devoted to unemployment reduction, particularly among the young; support to small and medium-sized enterprises; strengthening and expansion of training programmes; implementation of basic agreements on labour relations; and evaluation of the role of technology in job creation, since access to technology was critical to overcoming underdevelopment, and did not necessarily threaten employment.

29. Social integration would be improved by participation in the productive process and an equitable distribution of income and other economic benefits, requiring the provision of equal work opportunities, for which equal access to education, knowledge and information was vital. Democratic Governments were also instrumental in bringing vulnerable or marginalized segments into the mainstream of society.

30. In conclusion, he reaffirmed the Rio Group's profound belief in the unity of the agreed objectives of the Summit. International cooperation on social development issues would mutually benefit States and universally benefit people, who were the centre of development.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.